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A NOBLEMAN WITH BOURGEOIS ATTITUDES: N. H. PINELLO CHALLENGING THE POLITICAL ROLE OF THE FINNISH NOBLE ESTATE

**ДВОРЯНИН СО ВЗГЛЯДАМИ БУРЖУА: Н. Х. ПИНЕЛЛО БРОСАЕТ ВЫЗОВ
ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ РОЛИ ФИНЛЯНДСКОГО БЛАГОРОДНОГО СОСЛОВИЯ**

Аннотация: Статья посвящена выдающемуся и необычному представителю финляндского дворянства — Нильсу Хенрику Пинелло (1802–1879), принадлежавшему к итальянскому по происхождению роду и активно вращавшемуся в экономических, политических и культурных кругах Финляндии середины XIX столетия. Этот экстраординарный человек, чья карьера была весьма извилистой, попробовал себя на ниве множества профессиональных занятий, типичных для той эпохи экономической и общественной модернизации: от неудачливого помещика, предпринимателя, державшего лесопилку, обладателя докторской степени по горному делу — до журналиста, писателя, драматурга, владельца ресторана и театра, любителя музыки и истории, обосновавшегося в родном для него Або (фин. Турку). Кроме того, Пинелло представлял свой дворянский род на финляндских сословных сеймах и был депутатом первых трёх из них — в 1863–1864, 1867 и 1872 гг. Настоящая статья относится к жанру биографического исследования на микроисторическом уровне. Рассматривая жизнь Пинелло на фоне его политического поколения, ставшего свидетелем медленного (вос)создания финляндского четырёхсословного сейма на протяжении 1840–1870-х гг., я прослеживаю политические взгляды выдающегося дворянина, который ассоциировался в первую очередь с процветавшей буржуазией небольших городов. Я анализирую замечания Пинелло (часто язвительные и саркастичные) относительно проектов, высказываний, перспектив, образа жизни и т. п. представителей благородного сословия — угасание непосредственного политического влияния дворянства было оборотной стороной многообразия игравшихся им общественных ролей, оно помогает объяснить и его идеологический выбор. Обращая внимание на исключительность политических предпочтений и яркость публичного поведения Пинелло, столь выделявшие его из его среды, я стараюсь подчеркнуть не только *отклонения от нормы*, но также преобладавшие *модели нормального*, за рамки которых он, как может показаться, выходил. Анализируя историю финляндского дворянства XIX в. одновременно на микро- и макроуровнях, я надеюсь осветить сразу с двух сторон процесс, который в итоге привёл к упразднению четырёхсословной системы (вместе с дворянством) и созданию однопалатного парламента.

Keywords / Ключевые слова: Finland, nobility, 19th century, modernisation, political generations, identity, norms, deviance / Финляндия, дворянство, XIX в., модернизация, политические поколения, идентичность, нормы, отклонение от нормы

A Ginzburgian moment in the Archives of the House of Nobility

N. H. Pinello may well be responsible for the fact that I became a professional historian. When I was planning my *pro gradu* thesis in the history of architecture, back in the early 1990s, my professor suggested that I should look into the construction process of *Riddarhus* or the House of Nobility, a small neo-gothic palace located among the government buildings in the administrative centre of Helsinki.¹ In the beginning, I was not at all keen on the project, yet decided to give it a go. It soon got exiting, when I entered the archives, kept in the very House whose history I was beginning to investigate.

I started to read through the protocols of the first, 1848 *Riddarhus committee*, whose task was to decide about the functions to be included into the building and its size, inspect the available assets, and engage an architect to make preliminary plans. Pinello, then in his late forties, was one of the nine members of the committee, which consisted of three representatives from each of the three classes of nobility (see below). He soon became my favourite among all the historical figures I have encountered. In my contribution to *The History of Nobility in Finland* (forthcoming 2019), I touch upon Pinello again, which gave me the reason to finally write something solely about him.

Perusing the hand-written protocols, ink on handmade paper, I noticed that they were made partly in dialogue format, recording the committee members' lines word for word, sometimes with additional commentary by the secretary who had jotted them down. When I came to Pinello's words, I was surprised by his starkly oppositional attitude towards the whole idea of building the House, as well as by his no-nonsense-verging-on-downright-rude style of speech.

I was also surprised by my own immediate reaction. My thoughts went something like this: "Here is a Voice of Modernity, commenting on an outmoded project; an Outstandingly Modern Personality speaking in an ancient setting, against antiquated and self-serving attitudes.² How Can This Be?!"

Only after Pinello's unexpected tone of voice had disturbed my ready-made notions about nobility, I realised that I actually had any – and started wondering where they might have come from. By then, I had never met a person with manifest noble ancestry. Also, I did not seem to have many intellectually plausible items of knowledge about

¹ Literally 'House of Knights'; nowadays formally translated as 'the Palace of Nobility', presumably to make a difference between the building (Palace) and the organisation (House), see: "The House of Nobility," *Riddarhuset.Fi*, <https://www.riddarhuset.fi/english/> (accessed December 30, 2018). Below, I nevertheless give the name of the building as 'House of Nobility', to better reflect the more subdued tone of its official names, *Ritarihuone* and *Riddarhus*, in Finnish and Swedish, equating the building with the institution it represents.

² Writing my *pro gradu*, I dutifully documented both the justifications for and the contemporary critique against the House project. In the title, I, for balance's sake, juxtaposed the two approaches. Marja Vuorinen, *Pyramidi vai kunnian temppeli? Ritarihuoneen ikonografia* [A pyramid or a temple of honour? The iconography of the House of Nobility] (University of Helsinki, unpublished, 1994).

nobility, other than schoolbook commonplaces of its being a long-abolished historical estate, in the Scandinavian system the first among four, elsewhere one of three; a social group into which most of the powerful figures of the past had belonged to, up until, say, around the early 19th century.

What I seemed to have instead, and in plenty, were *attitudes*. Noble people were richer than all the others. They owned palatial manor houses, paid by spoils of war and cared for by the work of exploited peasants. As civil servants, they were powerful but not necessarily competent; they were idle; they were warlike; they had magnificent weapons, hounds, horses and carriages; they hunted; they gambled. They wore expensive clothes, fancy furs and heirloom jewellery. Often, they were physically degenerate, even feeble-minded, apparently from too much intermarrying. They were proud among their peers and contemptuous or even violent towards commoners. They spent most of their time in royal/imperial courts, doing little else than languishing about, dressing up, dancing, dining, scheming, intriguing and having affairs. If military, they wore fancy uniforms and decorations, and equally did nothing worthwhile, dividing their time between marching in parades and going to balls to dance with eligible maidens; marrying mainly amongst their peers, they made a habit of seducing the daughters of ordinary people just for sport, going to brothels, and/or marrying overaged bourgeois heiresses for money, in order to pay their long-accumulated, enormous debts. And so on, and so forth.

It began to dawn on me that these pre-existing notions could not be the whole truth. Provided that someone who spoke like Pinello could be found among the 19th-century Finnish nobility, my attitudes were not very charitable, either. In fact, they sounded suspiciously like an *intentionally hostile caricatures*, likely to have been made up *by a political enemy*.

At this point it became obvious that, as the saying goes, someone else had been thinking in my head. These ideas had clearly been planted, as sleeping agents, designed to spring into action in the presence of the notion of nobility. The question was, by whom had they been planted, and how?

Looking at the political and societal developments that took place in the 19th century — from the long shadow of the 1789 French Revolution to emerging nationalism, educational reform, all-round modernisation of bureaucracy, technology, economy and the media, as well as the growing popularity of the progressive ideas of equality and democracy — the perpetrator was not hard to find.

In the historic conflict where European nobilities were the eventual losers, the prime challenger and winner-to-be was the ever-growing educated, meritocratic, bourgeoisie-based commoner stratum. Having the most to gain from the impending power shift, it painted its predecessor and current rival in black, projecting an image of incompetent and exploitative international elite. In the process, nobility eventually lost its position

as a powerful political collective, even though maintaining all the resources stemming from property, culture, formal hierarchy and networks.

Having thus established the issue of *who*, I then arrived to the *how*. I was vaguely aware of the countless classic novels, plays, historical films and TV-series that portrayed members of nobility as rich, violent, power-hungry, incompetent and exploitative. Looking at 19th-century novels, mainly by progressive commoner authors, I soon realised the emotional potential of fiction to smuggle in political ideas, aided by nationalist historiography and militantly progressive press.³ Foucauldian *discourse theory*⁴ came in handy, when analysing the cross-media image of nobility as a deliberately created *enemy image*. After finishing my dissertation on the topic⁵ I have moved on, to the affiliate branches of *propaganda studies* and *dynamic elite studies*, focussing on how ideological power works, political movements organise, hegemonies shift, power structures get replaced, and regimes change.⁶ The insights gained along that path proved useful for making sense of Pinello's political (mis)behaviour.

Finally, the concept of *exceptional typical* (exceptional normal, typical exception, *etc.*), developed by Carlo Ginzburg, became invaluable for the project at hand. According to him, a decisive moment in a research process comes when the researcher finds in a source something that *does not fit* to their idea of a particular phenomenon; the researcher's acculturation thus plays a vital part in the process. Weakening the researcher's preconceived understanding of their subject, the find *disrupts* the working hypothesis. The *significant anomaly* then becomes a *clue* that leads to unexpected new insights, forcing a change in the whole focus of enquiry, affecting also the eventual interpretation. Juxtaposing a deviant with the prevailing norms of his era meaningfully combines micro and macro levels of interest.⁷ In this article, I combine the individual, biographic level with the collective-cultural and the structural. A diachronic analysis

³ See e. g. Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900* (London and New York: Verso, 1999) and *The Way of the World: the Bildungsroman in European Culture* (London: Verso, 1987); Anthony Taylor, *Lords of Misrule: Hostility to Aristocracy in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Ernst Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983)

⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁵ Marja Vuorinen, *Kuviteltu aatelismies. Aateluus viholliskuvana ja itseymmäryksenä 1800-luvun Suomessa* [Imagined nobleman. Nobility as an enemy-image and an in-group identity in 19th century Finland] (Helsinki: SKS, 2010).

⁶ See e. g. Marja Vuorinen and Tuomas Kuronen, "Introduction: Regime Change as a Process," in *Regime Changes: Reassessed, Anticipated and in the making*, Marja Vuorinen & al. (eds) (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: CSP, 2016), VIII–XXIII; Marja Vuorinen, "From Past to Present, to Future," in *Regime Changes*, 404–414.

⁷ Matti Peltonen, "Clues, Margins, and Monads: The Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research," *History and Theory. Studies in the Philosophy of History*, 40: 3 (2002): 347–359, <http://www.culturahistorica.es/peltonen/clues.pdf>.

of several subsequent political moments reveals a gradual change in what were the 'normal' political ideas, social behaviour and societal attitudes of Finnish 19th-century noblemen.

N. H. Pinello 1802–79: a biographic summary⁸

The Pinello family, originally from Genova, Italy, had been naturalised in Sweden in the beginning of 18th century. Nils Henrik was born in Turku in August 17, 1802, as a Swedish subject, and died there in September 9, 1879, as a subject of the Russian Emperor in the Finnish Grand Duchy. His parents were Dominicus Julius Pinello, colonel in the Swedish navy, and Sofia Elisabeth née Bruncrona. In his teens, Nils Henrik, too, experimented on a naval career, entering the Turku-based *Archipelago Fleet*. He studied in the Academy of Turku from 1817 onwards, graduating in 1823, after which he went to Sweden, to pursue studies in metallurgy and mining, getting his PhD diploma in 1826. During this period, he acted as an amanuensis for the Swedish mining authority, and later assisted the Finnish authorities in mapping the Kisko copper mine. In 1827, he married Anna Juliana Schmidt (1809–86, daughter of the Postmaster of Riga, by his wife née Pychlau). They had a son, Julius Dominikus (1836–1910), who became a captain and later businessman.

Pinello started his career as *brukspatron* (owner-manager of an industrial establishment in a rural setting, e. g. metal works or paper mill), engaging also in extensive farming in the Turku region, first on the Kirjakkala Bruk in Perniö (1826–31), then on the Kartanonkylä Bruk in Tammela (1834–47), the latter inherited from his father. Pinello experienced an economic failure both as an industrialist and as a farmer, allegedly because being too generous in his dealings with other people.

Returning to city life in his mid-thirties, Pinello engaged as the editor-in-chief of *Åbo Tidningar* [Turku News] in 1836–47 and again in 1853–56. During his time in office, he improved the quality of the paper by starting to publish literary news, as well as articles on economy. In 1849, he founded *Tidning för landtbrukare och näringsidkare*, an instructive periodical aimed at farmers and entrepreneurs, and contributed to it for fifteen years, writing articles about agriculture. For *Åbo Underrättelser* [Turku Notices] he wrote cheerful stories on local cultural history, re-published in five small volumes in 1866–78. His short-lived *Puffens kalender* (1869) was a humorous publication, much in the vein of Rudolf Wallin's Stockholm funny paper *Kapten Puff* (1856–65).

As secretary and/or member of the board of *Finnish Economic Society*, from 1842 until 1865, Pinello participated in the modernisation of Finnish agriculture. In 1840, he was

⁸ Based on: Pia Forssell, "Pinello, Nils Henrik (1802–1879)," *Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu. Studia Biographica* 4 (Helsinki: SKS, 1997–), June 14, 2002, <http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:sk-s-kebg-002932> (accessed December 30, 2018); Simo Tuomola "Kapten Puff," *Punainen Turku*, 2014, <http://punainturku.blogspot.com/2014/08/kapten-puff.html> (accessed December 30, 2018).

involved in founding a Sunday-school for young workers, instructing them in a plethora of practical subjects; Pinello himself taught chemistry. In 1861, he became the chair of a society for popular education, *Bildningscirken* (Education Circle), in whose gatherings he also gave lectures.

For lighter pursuits, he engaged in theatre, music, literature, visual arts (he was a member of the Finnish Art Society) and local cultural history. The Committee for restoring the relics of Turku Cathedral was founded on his initiative in 1865; one of its accomplishments was the sarcophagus, made of black marble, into which the remains of the one-time Queen of Sweden, Karin Månsdotter, the spouse of King Erik XIV, were moved in 1867.⁹

Unlike many bourgeois hosts and hostesses of the period, Pinello welcomed to his home all artists and intellectuals, irrespective of their economic or social position. A lasting monument to his famous hospitality is the traditional Turku restaurant *Pinella* (est. 1848), named after and, according to some sources, partly funded and owned by him. Its clientele included many Finnish cultural celebrities of the period.¹⁰ Incidentally, it was designed by the architect who, twenty years later, would also be responsible for the planning the House of Nobles in Helsinki, namely Georg Theodor Chiewitz (1815–62), of Swedish origin and one-time municipal architect of Turku.

Like his lady wife, Pinello was an enthusiastic amateur actor, who also translated and modified contemporary plays to suit the amateur ensemble. He was involved in the planning process of the *Turku Theatre*¹¹ and a member of its board right from the beginning, for years 1839–56 as its director. The opening ceremony took place in January 21, 1839, with *Gubben i Bergsbygden*¹² [Old man of the Mountain District], a musical comedy as the premiere. Pinello himself wrote a historical tragedy *Birgitta Kurck*, about the last abbess of the Order of St. Bridget's Cloister in Naantali, as well as libretti for two operas on national subjects, which, however, were never produced.¹³ He was known also as an inspiring festive speaker and author of festive poems.

⁹ "Kaarina Maununtyttären hammas" [Karin Månsdotter's tooth], *Erik Johan Löfgren*, 2012, <http://erikjohanlofgren.blogspot.com/2012/08/kaarina-maununtyttaren-hammas.html> (accessed December 30, 2018). See also C. J. Gardberg, *Turun linnan kolme Katariinaa* [The three Catharines of the Turku Castle] (Helsinki: Otava, 1986), 196–200.

¹⁰ E. g. Elias Lönnrot, folklorist and author of Kalevala; Zachris Topelius, history professor, journalist and novelist; J. L. Runeberg, poet laureate; J. V. Snellman, philosopher and statesman; and Josef Julius Wecksell, playwright.

¹¹ Nowadays known as *Åbo Svenska Teatern* (Swedish Theatre in Turku), the oldest surviving theatre building in Finland.

¹² Original play by Benoît Joseph Marsollier des Vivetières.

¹³ *Junkerns förmyndare* [The Junker's guardian] and *Herman Wimpel*, music by A. G. Ingelius and O. F. B. Byström.

Pinello on the House project in the *Committee of 1848–49* and in the press

The decision about building a House of Nobles was included already into the proceedings of the Diet of Porvoo in 1809. Soon after, in 1818–19, the nobility of the newly-established Grand Duchy of Finland organised as an autonomous unit, separate from its Swedish mother organisation. In the Helsinki City Plan of 1812, a building plot, close to the Senate, had been reserved for a house of the four estates.¹⁴ As no Diets had assembled since, it was still available in the 1840s, when the nobility seriously started planning a house of its own. After much ado, an edifice made of red brick, in neo-gothic style, was erected in 1858–62, just in time to house the 1862 *January Committee* preparing the Diet of 1863.¹⁵

The essential 19th-century division into traditionalist-conservatives and progressive “radical” liberals culminated in the debate that surrounded the initial phase of the building process. The main argument focussed on the contemporary role and functions — if any — of the noble estate in the modernising world.

Mainstream nobility still saw itself as a pillar of society, a proud upholder of aristocratic and (Swedish) royalist traditions. The majority of the members of the *1848–49 Committee* — officers, civil servants and landowners, most of whom had reached a ripe old age — were definitely of that opinion. They supported the building project without reservation, hoping to achieve a House that would reflect the dignity of both the estate and the nation of which it was the representative. According to some, the limited funds of “the humble nobility of a small nation” called for a “simple but elegant” building, whereas others preferred more extravagant designs. Nevertheless, all agreed about the functions it should house, namely: an assembly hall, with the coats-of-arms of the noble families hanging on its walls, perceived as the icon of the estate as a political collective; meeting and collections rooms; and a vault for the genealogical documents and funds.¹⁶

The only exception to the general praise were N. H. Pinello’s sarcastic comments, documented in the protocols in an abridged (see below) and, for the most part, indirect form, accompanied by the secretary’s dry remark “according to Mr. Pinello’s reasoning.” He called to question the necessity of the whole building project, refuted the idea of nobility as an important or indeed necessary agent in the society, and questioned the ability of the other committee members to correctly assess the surrounding —

¹⁴ J. A. Ehrenström, “Nouveau plan de la ville de Helsingfors en Finlande” (1812) at the Finnish National Archives, Helsinki.

¹⁵ Per Olof von Törne, *Finlands Riddarhus I* (Helsingfors: Söderström, 1926), 70–152 (on the planning process, 148–152) and *Finlands Riddarhus II* (Helsingfors: Söderström, 1935), 1–117 (on the planning process, 31–91).

¹⁶ “Ridd. och Adels Komiterades Protocoller för åren 1848–1849,” at the Archives of the House of Nobility, Helsinki, 47–61, 114–115, 226–227. See also von Törne, *Finlands Riddarhus I*, 58–60 and *Finlands Riddarhus II*, 2–3, 14–18, 21, 23.

economic and societal — realities. As he saw it, the building now under design would be nothing but “a whitewashed mausoleum, to be filled only with the bones of the dead.” The building fund, started decades ago, in the earnest belief that Diets would occur on a regular basis, had long since lost its original purpose. Furthermore, the field of the political activity of the estate had dwindled almost into nothing. Therefore, he suggested, the accumulated funds would be better used for other, more noble (pun intended) causes.¹⁷

Pinello eventually opted out from the committee — quite unceremoniously, simply by not arriving to the first 1849 meeting, held in March 5. His absence came as a surprise to his fellow committee members, who first sent him an urgent request to appear, and later proceeded to choose a proxy to take his place.¹⁸ He ran again for the membership of the second, 1855 Committee, whose task was mainly to decide about technicalities,¹⁹ but lost after a tie vote,²⁰ and did not run for the third one.

In 1857, when the building of the House was about to start, the project started to attract visibility in the press. On December 22, 1857 a well-informed, anonymous party, under pseudonym *En medlem af Finska adeln* [a member of the Finnish nobility], severely criticised the project in *Åbo Underrättelser*. Judging by the content, the style, the choice of newspaper, as well as the hallmark Latin quotation, *Cui bono?* [To whom is it a benefit?] at its opening, the author was in all likelihood Pinello himself.

The author condemned the project as useless and overly expensive, outdated, based on undemocratic initiative, childish, vain, pompous, and altogether megalomaniac. As he saw it, the house was about to become a monument of past glory, as well as a fancy showroom for coats-of-arms, for which even a lesser building would be more than enough. House or no House, nobility as an Estate had significance only if its actions truly benefitted the country.

“In our practical times, one is in the habit of expecting sound reason and common sense to be found behind such big building projects, particularly when conducted at the expenses of a collective and in its name. Nowadays, people don’t often erect pyramids as resting-places for rotting royal corpses, nor are we in

¹⁷ “Ridd. och Adels Komiterades Protocoller för åren 1848–1849,” 55–56. See also von Törne *Finlands Riddarhus I*, 17.

¹⁸ “Ridd. och Adels Komiterades Protocoller för åren 1848–1849,” 107, 110, 113–114.

¹⁹ “Ridd. och Adels Komiterades Protocoller för år 1855,” at the Archives of the House of Nobility, Helsinki, 47–53, 81–90.

²⁰ von Törne, *Finlands Riddarhus II*, 47. It appears that Pinello’s sarcasms had hit the target particularly closely. After almost a century, they still inspired a historian of the nobility — professor of history of Finland in *Åbo Academi* and a fellow Turku-dweller, who also happened to be a member of the (then-abolished) noble estate — to personal slights. von Törne surly informs his reader that Pinello had, due to bankruptcy, by the time of his committee adventure, been compelled to give up the “seigneurial” lifestyle of his early manhood. What’s more, Pinello was known to have appeared in a wedding, in 1849, wearing a brand-new uniform of the nobility, with spurs, even though he was supposed to be so anti-nobility. See: von Törne, *Finlands Riddarhus II*, 14, 17–18, 42, 47.

the habit of designing mile-long grotto temples for monstrous false gods. To avoid being laughed at, it is wise to steer clear of ventures of such an oriental and antediluvian kind. [...] One doesn't often erect three-storey-high stone buildings only to house a collection of coats-of-arms.

To get himself a hat, a man must first have a head; to build a House of Nobility, there should be a nobility to start with. But is there? On paper, yes; in reality, only insofar as it comes to legal privileges [...], not as an actively functioning and beneficial societal force. One does not believe in a nobility based merely on bloodlines and diplomas, any more, at least not enough to build stone houses for such an imaginary quantity."

He then goes on to stress that, as the building project was to be paid from the estate's common funds, the decision should not have been made within a small, closed circle — particularly as it now seemed that the completing of the project would require additional funding. And as there was still no certainty that a Diet would ever assemble, the House, for the time being, had no perceptible function. Mere office space, for secretaries, archives and board meetings, could be had more cheaply by renting. In the present situation, the project appeared a particularly high-risk venture.

"If what is being said is actually true, the state has rejected an application for a building loan, made by the Direction of the Nobility. This, as such, is no wonder — expect perhaps among those who, in their warm enthusiasm to further the honour and status of their estate, have thought that an empty House of Nobility might act as a substitute for an intelligent nobility, able to promote important patriotic interests. But who isn't filled with wonder and indignation, looking at a decision that serves merely a wish to shine, like a little glow-worm, and which on top of everything else is getting the whole estate into debt!"

The author further informs the reader of "having heard" that in the meeting of the first committee "someone" had opposed the plan, suggesting that the accumulated funds be distributed among the younger members of the estate as travel funds and stipends, thus allowing them to acquire new ideas, skills and experiences that would genuinely benefit the Fatherland. By so doing they might even earn new respect for their old estate among the other factions of society, who now observed the building project either with commiseration or with ironic amusement.²¹

Two years later, when the construction was underway, another nobleman journalist, Helsinki-based August Schauman, continued the critique much in the same vein, in his boulevard paper *Papperslyktan* [paper lantern]. One of his contributing authors, C. A. Gottlund, linguist and folklorist, a commoner, made sinister fun of the "dark and rusty" coats-of-arms, hanging abandoned on the walls of the main hall of the "House of Lords" as sad memories of the bygone great days when nobility was still relevant as a societal group.²² Schauman himself commented on the progress of the project on his column *Veckans Krönika* [weekly chronicle] in mildly ironic tones. After its completion

²¹ *Abo Underrättelser*, December 22, 1857.

²² *Papperslyktan*, January 31, 1859.

he pronounced that the building was, indeed, quite handsome and suitable for its purpose — were it not, in the current political circumstances, hopelessly outmoded.²³

In due course, the third, 1860 *Committee* was faced with a *fait accompli* of the worst sort. The construction site, began in 1858, was under shutdown. The building was under roof but completely unfurnished, and the funds had completely run out. As the Finnish-nationalist paper *Suometar* so elegantly put it, “people say that this big and fat block of a building, standing half-finished here in the capital, has eaten up all the money the nobility had.”²⁴

The composition of the third committee differed greatly from that of its predecessors. Inspired by youthful radicalism, by contemporaries called *sextiotalsliberalismen* [the 1860s liberalism], the new generation was only too happy to discard outmoded noble traditions; some of them were actually married to commoner women.²⁵ Along Pinello’s 1848 lines, the committee condemned the project as reckless, outmoded and pompous. They saw no other way out but to appeal to the emperor for additional funds. They also pointed out that the building plot had originally been marked for a House of the Four Estates, and had been seized by the nobility in what now seemed obscure circumstances. In a democratic spirit, they therefore suggested sharing it with the commoner estates.²⁶ Pinello himself, on November 6, 1860, in *Åbo Underrättelser* reminded any and all that the 1848–49 committee had agreed only to the use of a half of the estate’s funds for the project.²⁷

The emperor eventually granted the funds to finish the building — on the express condition that no part of it was to be handed over to the other three estates. Next year, the conditions of the loan were modified, releasing the nobility from the obligation to pay it back. This unexpected gift was considered awkward within the estate, as it might seem that the emperor had bought its loyalty.²⁸ The debate about the future of the building, its future holders as well as about who was going to pay the running expenses, continued, on and off, for decades, up until a separate palace, *Säätytalo*, was erected for the three commoner estates in 1891, two blocks away from the House of Nobility.²⁹

Pinello in the protocols of the Noble estate: Diets 1863–64, 1867 and 1872

²³ *Papperslyktan* August 15, 1959; February 4, 1861; May 27, 1861; September 2, 1861.

²⁴ *Suometar*, September 21, 1860.

²⁵ von Törne, *Finlands Riddarhus I*, 63–78.

²⁶ “De Comitterades Protocoller 1860,” at the Archives of the House of Nobility, Helsinki, fol. 5–61.

²⁷ *Åbo Underrättelser*, November 6, 1860.

²⁸ “Riddarhus Directionens Protocoller 1860,” 58–61, 78–82. “Riddarhus Directionens Protocoller 1861,” at the Archives of the House of Nobility, Helsinki, 44–48.

²⁹ Vuorinen, *Kuviteltu aatelismies*, 277–281 and 344–346. “The House of the Estates,” *Wikipedia*, January 11, 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_the_Estates (accessed December 30, 2018).

Pinello represented his family within the noble estate at the first three Diets. Regardless of his prior bombastic rhetoric, he showed little interest in the actualities of general law-making. Nor did he contribute to the discussions about future investments in infrastructure and technology, even when they touched upon his personal experiences and expertise, e. g. economy, agriculture, forestry, mining, and domestic higher education. This may well be due to his not being present at the Diet at all times, as he undoubtedly also had many duties back home. During the second Diet he even was temporarily represented by a proxy.

The few comments by Pinello that can be found in the protocols, relate to issues that come close to the core of the noble identity. In the beginning of the first Diet he spoke for the abolition of the division of noble estate into three classes that voted separately.³⁰ A new *Riddarhusordning* that would in due course establish *per capita* voting was already in the making, but while it had not yet been passed as a law, the division-based system persisted — strongly favouring the members of the first and second classes, relatively few in number. The practice was criticized as undemocratic by several representatives of nobility, particularly in connexion with personalised elections, i.e. when nominating delegates to special committees, whose membership called for particular expertise. For his part, Pinello regretted the present practice, strongly preferring simple majority vote, but saw that the only realistic option was to wait out until the new *Riddarhusordning* was in force. Seeing that the continuity of the Diets was uncertain, he stressed the necessity to maintain all the formalities of the Constitution, of which the still valid old *Riddarhusordning* was a part, as even the smallest infringement of legality might endanger the future of the whole parliamentary process.³¹

When addressing the politically hot issue of allowing or not allowing the right of representation to those Finnish noblemen who had their permanent residence “abroad” (outside the Finnish Grand Duchy but within the Russian Empire proper, typically in order to pursue a military career within the imperial army) Pinello took good care of wrapping his position in flowery speech, with ironic echoes of his earlier critique. “Filled with joy

³⁰ The first or *herreklasse* consisted of counts and barons, the second or *riddarklasse* of the descendants of the lower-status members of the council of the realm, most of whom had been elevated into the first class, while the third or *svenneklasse* included the rest, i.e. the untitled nobility. This practice had been abolished already once during the Swedish period, in 1719, but had been reinstated in 1778, as a part of his reorganisation of the government, by Gustav III, who simultaneously raised several hundreds of the most ancient noble families into the by then dwindled second class. Class division remained in force in Finland even after 1809, when she became a Grand Duchy within the Russian empire, even though abolished for good in Sweden already in 1810. In Finland, it was finally abolished in 1869.

³¹ *Protokoll hållna hos Höglofl. Ridderskapet och Adeln vid Landtdagen i Helsingfors åren 1863–1864. Första häftet. Från den 17 September till den 27 October 1863* (Helsingfors: Finska Litteratur-Sällskapets Tryckeri, 1864), 16–17.

and enthusiasm” he first thanked the noble-minded Emperor Alexander II for allowing the Diet to assemble, metaphorically “leading Finland’s children from the Egyptian slavery to the long-awaited promised land of Canaan”. For the first time in many decades, the Finnish people, represented by the four Estates, had been granted the opportunity to come together, “free and independent,” to debate and decide about their common future. However, Pinello also stressed that the right to representation was, literally, a *right*, decreed by the law. Thus he stated, if only in parenthesis, that the summoning of the parliament should not depend solely on the emperor’s will. Nevertheless, this was, indeed, a “new dawn for the Fatherland.” “*Post nubila Phoebus*” — after the clouds, the sun.³²

About extending the right to representation to the gentlemen in question, Pinello was of two minds. In his first address he granted that, like all patriots abroad, the Finnish noblemen resident in Russia were inspired by the same love of the Fatherland as those who had stayed at home. Also, Russia and Finland shared the same ruler. What made Russia, in a crucial sense, a *foreign country*, whose inhabitants had little in common with Finland, were the enormous differences between the laws and traditions. To make matters worse, when the noblemen staying in Russia visited home, they invariably bragged on about how efficiently everything was organised there. How, asked Pinello, could these men, who obviously held the laws of their native country in contempt, participate in the making of those laws, particularly as the said laws would probably never apply to them? Nor would they ever themselves pay the taxes they had agreed upon on behalf of others. The only exception to this rule were those who still owned property in Finland and were subject to taxation thereof.³³

Pinello’s certain provincialism in relation to Russia may well have stemmed from his rootedness in the westernmost part of Finland, including his strong family bonds as well as personal and cultural ties with the former mother country, Sweden. Later on, he nevertheless cautiously aligned himself with the moderate or *Realpolitik* option. He was willing to allow the right to representation even for those residing abroad — but only for the present Diet, expecting that the issue would be settled definitively in the new *Riddarhusordning*.³⁴

Commenting on the practical discussion about the recompenses to be paid to the stenographers used by the noble estate during the meetings, Pinello suggested

³² Ibid, 21–22.

³³ Ibid, 22–23.

³⁴ Ibid, 60. The 1869 *Riddarhusordning* granted the right of representation to Finnish noblemen who lived permanently in Russia. For full debate on the subject, see Marja Vuorinen, “Finnish Nobility Between Nation and Empire”, *Peterbergskii istoricheskii zhurnal* 4 (2015), 99–111. Online version: *Cyberleninka*, <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/v/finnish-nobility-between-nation-and-empire-the-swedish-legacy-and-the-diet-of-porvoo-in-1809> (accessed December 30, 2018).

the same amount as was paid at the Swedish Diet. By adding that his knowledge about the exact sums came from his having been present, among the audience, in the Swedish Riddarhus in Stockholm, during the Diet, he at the same time demonstrated his interest, and informedness, in parliamentary processes in general.³⁵

Understandably, Pinello's mind was exceptionally acute in all matters monetary. E. g. in the connection of discussing the possibility of granting funds to members of the estate who had to travel to Helsinki from afar, Pinello brought up his service as a member of the first, 1848–49 Committee and the related travel costs, still pending. He even practically suggested, though to no avail, that the estate might settle the overdue payment for his coat-of-arms, hung among others on the Great or Knights' Hall of the House of Nobility, as a trade-off for his old travel expenses.³⁶

Reporting about his parliamentary experiences in the press, Pinello's well-known pseudonym, *Kapten Puff*, opened with a humorous topic, with strong underlying aspects of equality and identity. In the eve of the first Diet, the Governor-General had proposed that noble representatives who were not militaries or civil servants (i. e. already in possession of proper uniforms), should acquire a "civilian" uniform to wear during the sessions. After debating the issue to and fro within the estate, the problem was solved by applying the Russian rank system – resulting in a set of uniform designs that allowed the finest, light-coloured trousers only for the four highest ranks. The uniform incident evoked much ridicule in the press, including a contribution from pseudonym –s –n, who, under the title *About the nobility's lost pants*, complained about the inequality of the rank-based design — of foreign origin, and foreign also to the idea of parliament — as well as about the nuisance and unnecessary expense of having a new set of ceremonial clothes made in such a hurry.³⁷

Fresh home from the Diet, Pinello naturally wanted the final word.

"I have lots of gold embroidery around my neck; I wear a uniform with blue turn-ups and passepoils, a sword on my side, spurs on the heels. All this tells that I am a handsome Finnish nobleman, just returned from the Diet, and in general happy and content. I would have been much happier, however, if only I had been allowed to keep those unforgettable and for ever deeply missed golden pants!"

Before changing the subject to discuss the more pressing Turku affairs, he mentioned in passing another noticeable topic that had come up at the beginning of the Diet: the daring suggestion, by two radical noblemen, of a wholesale abolishment of noble privileges. According to Pinello, it was all the more remarkable because none of the other,

³⁵ *Protokoll hållna hos Höglofl. Ridderskapet och Adeln vid Landtdagen i Helsingfors åren 1863–1864. Första häftet*, 43.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 738–740.

³⁷ *Papperslyktan*, March 5 and 12, 1860; *Helsingfors Dagblad*, June 19, 1862 and August 31, 1863 (the pants case); *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, July 24, 1862, August 22 and September 1, 1863; *Helsingfors Tidningar*, July 27, 1862; *Åbo Underrättelser*, August 5, 1862 and April 30, 1863.

commoner estates had followed suit, and would undoubtedly gain the Finnish nobility great respect and positive publicity abroad.³⁸

When it came to noble traditions, Pinello, despite his radical democratic ideas, definitely was no iconoclast. In 1872, he agreed to prepare for publication a new *Adelskalender* — an official index, with up-to-date records, of each Finnish noble family — for a recompense of 400 marks. He began his speech of acceptance by quoting the Roman maxim *Ultra posse nemo obligatur* [no one is obligated beyond what he is able to do], meaning that he would do his utmost to complete this important task. However, he commented on its preconditions by stressing that he could only guarantee complete results as regards the families resident in Finland, snidely pointing out that even the decade-long endeavours of the Direction of the *Riddarhus* so far had not resulted in complete records of the families that constantly stayed abroad.³⁹

Pinello in the press on nobility and on the society at large

Pinello's causeries and short stories, originally published in *Åbo Underrättelser* and reprinted as a series of inexpensive booklets,⁴⁰ featured a rich mixture of Turku townsfolk from all walks of life – militaries, children, students, matrons, maidens, spinsters, noblemen, aldermen, fishermen, ladies, watchmakers, theatre enthusiasts, sellers at the market. Pinello paints a series of street, home and party scenes, in current and historical settings, depicting the daily life of the city in a cheerful and perceptive way. Summery outings to nearby country villages, parsonages and manor houses are likewise described in colourful detail. Even though the stories involve people of distinctly different statuses, focus is on their informal person-to-person communication, not on formal, position-conscious courtesies. To Pinello, somebody's noble status does not seem to make a difference.⁴¹

Contexts for comparison

To make the most of the significance of Pinello's deviance, I seek to compare his ways with several different sets of normalcy. I also introduce a tentative time dimension, suggesting that the sort of critique towards nobility that in the early 19th century could

³⁸ *Åbo Underrättelser*, April 26, 1864.

³⁹ *Protokoll fördrat hos Höglofl. Ridderskapet och Adeln vid Landtdagen i Helsingfors, år 1872. Första häftet. Från den 5 Februari till den 22 April* (Helsingfors: Hufvudstadsbladets Tryckeri, 1872), 182–183, 206.

⁴⁰ Nils Henrik Pinello, *Små berättelser och tidsbilder I–V* [Little stories and period pieces I–V] (Åbo [Turku]: S. W. Wilén & Co:s Boktryckeri, 1866–1878).

⁴¹ Illustrating the so-called *homogenising gentry* thesis, by Kaarlo Wirilander, in his *Herrasväkeä. Suomen säätyläistö 1721–1870* [Gentlefolk: Finnish gentry 1721–1870] (Helsinki: SHS, 1974), 356–409. Likewise, Pinello refutes the opposite concept of *narcissism of minor differences*. See Anton Blok, *Honour and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 115–135.

be perceived as open contempt, was in the second half of the century slowly becoming the norm. Among the political opponents, the self-serving anti-noble attitudes were often based on misinformation or deliberate misunderstanding, but within the noble estate itself the critique was usually based on accurate and varied inside information, personal experience and comprehensive understanding of the developing societal situation.

Traditional in-group norm is best presented by the politically active noblemen of the era. They supported a consistent variety of views — from pompous to serious to practical, and from deep to shallow. This group includes the majority of the members of the later Committees, as well as many of the representatives of nobility at the Diet. The latter were far more numerous and thus much more varied in their views than the former.

As we have seen, Pinello's ideas about the future of the noble estate differed greatly from the rest of the 1840s committee members, who can be described as *hard-core traditionalists*. On the other hand, his opinions about the class division, the legality principle, and the right of representation were well in line with the *moderates* at the 1860s Diets, who were in majority. Also, while he had his doubts about the future of nobility as a political and status entity, he nevertheless openly appreciated the aesthetic, historical and family traditions that went with it.

Another relevant group, whose normal was somewhat less traditional, were the noblemen who vented their political attitudes in public, either as journalists, like Pinello, or as writers of fiction. It seems that among them Pinello-style deviance was actually quite common, making it an *emerging modernist* norm. It was shared by a handful of progressive noblemen, forming a kind of 'deviants incorporated' faction within the estate. Yet, as a group they decidedly differed from the progressive nobleman types presented by commoner journalists and novelists,⁴² in their innate ability, and willingness, to correctly recognise and assess the many features of noble lifestyle and identity while maintaining a sense of proportion, even when severely criticising the antics of their own estate.

Another context is provided by the openly aggressive critique, as presented by the progressive commoner authors. Pinello and his likes had little to do with the *stereotypical noblemen of the hostile fiction*. However, he does have features in common with some of the ideal types of nobility, concocted by the commoner authors, particularly the figures of civil servant, active landowner engaged in extensive farming, and hapless mining entrepreneur.⁴³

⁴² Vuorinen, *Kuviteltu aatelismies*, 65–195.

⁴³ The list of noblemen ideal types, according to me, is as follows: *Warrior* (ancient and modern subtypes), *Courtier* (ancient type), *Civil servant*, *Landowner* (passive and active subtypes), *Modern professional* (very rare), *Modern entrepreneur* (often hapless), and *Complete loser* (completely hapless, often suicidal). Ibid, 125–136.

The mixed society, as described by Pinello in his short stories and causeries, no doubt reflects his own daily surroundings. As such, it differs greatly from the strictly hierarchical model of society perceived, and described with gusto, by the more militant commoner authors of the period. Their politically justified social paranoia typically resulted in ball scenes involving gross humiliation of commoner newcomers entering the hitherto closed aristocratic circles – often seen through the eyes of a chronically suspicious onlooker, with structurally motivated feelings of inferiority.⁴⁴

“Portraits of out-of-the-ordinary Finnish noblemen” — a series in the making?

This article is a part of my ongoing ‘slow’ project, for years simmering on the back burner, of compiling a series of portraits of unorthodox public figures among 19th-century Finnish noblemen. With each addition to the portrait series, I hope to benefit from the broadening scope and cumulative possibilities of comparison between the cases. I present them here in order to contextualise Pinello’s career, juxtaposing him with others of his kind.

The radical nobleman figures, some of whom I have listed below, have several things in common. Each, from his particular point of view, in the course of particular decades, witnessed the gradual passing of nobility as a political estate. Each gave public voice to his expectations and experiences when the process was under way, some also when it was already completed, and did so in a personal, often emotionally loaded style. In retrospective, they appear as witnesses of disintegration, either as onlookers, registering the symptoms, or as agents of change. In a way, they even complement — as additional real-life aspects — the caricatured set of ideal types of modern nobleman made up by the critical commoner authors.

My first attempt at tracing the public endeavours of unusual Finnish noblemen was about Arvid Järnefelt (1861–1932) who made his political career as a Tolstoian radical and champion of the landless poor, in the decades before and after the turn of the 20th century.⁴⁵ With N. H. Pinello (1802–79), we go back to the earlier political generation, and to the political ideas of a nobleman who mainly identified with the mid-century small-town bourgeoisie, then on its prime.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 76–102 and passim.

⁴⁵ See Marja Vuorinen. “Arvid Järnefelt, the Finnish Tolstoy: A radical social reformer and a nobleman”, *VIRTUS: Yearbook of the history of the nobility* 2011/18 (2012) and Marja Vuorinen “Arvid Järnefeltin *Vanhempieni romaani* aatelisnostalgian salakuljettajana” [Arvid Järnefelt’s *The novel of my parents* as a vessel of smuggling in secret nostalgia], *Hybris* 1 (2015), <https://hybrislehti.net/arvid-jrnefeltin-vanhempieni-romaani-aatelisnostalgian-salakuljettajana/>.

In a sense, Pinello represents the exact opposite of Molière's famous social pretender (in both senses of the word), *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*.⁴⁶ Whereas the protagonist of the French play was a *social climber*, Pinello was what might be called a *social descender*, leisurely stepping down the stairs, towards a relaxed bourgeois world of theatre, music, street life, restaurants and laughter. Compared to the modern and social-minded but also fun-loving Pinello, Järnefelt the self-styled anarchist – dead serious, conscientious, and religious to a fault — was apt to descend socially by metaphorically jumping down from the cliff of high social status. Still standing on the moral high ground, he condemned the extravagances of the 19th-century aristocracy while secretly mourning its passing. However, unlike many of his kind, he honestly tried to practice what he preached, assuming the lifestyle of a humble peasant landholder, working on his fields and living off the produce of his farm.⁴⁷

Other potential exceptional noblemen of Pinello's ilk include K. A. Tavaststjerna (1860–98), whose preferred pose was nobleman-as-a-private-person. As an educated professional — architect, traveller, novelist and small-town journalist — he personifies the *low-key variety of conscious withdrawal* from political and state duties, in contrast to Järnefelt's *loud and self-assertive resignation*. One of the most influential journalist and publisher of Pinello's era, the Helsinki-based August Schauman (1826–96), already mentioned above, was something of a cross-breed between Pinello and Tavaststjerna. His day-to-day attitude towards his nobility might be described as *indifferent*.

The series of attitude portraits is completed by the famous underachiever and eventual autobiographer Anders Ramsay (1832–1910) whose life story might be perceived as the sad version of Pinello's sunny career. After a miserable childhood, having lost the family fortune in his middle age, Ramsay metaphorically went into a cocoon, to re-emerge as an author of a series of painfully honest memoirs. His original shameless self-pity (to judge from his descriptions, at times quite justified) is most apparent in the first volumes of what grew into a self-healing project, accentuated with *regret of not making it* as a proper nobleman.

All the above authors, each in their way, recorded detailed and deeply felt personal experiences. Simultaneously, they reflected the general economic, social and cultural developments of the period, from the early 19th century onwards. The gradual liberalisation of noble politics is revealed in their careers and personalities. Among them, Pinello takes the pride of place, as the first loudly dissident, socially and politically radical Finnish 19th-century nobleman.

⁴⁶ Known in its various English translations as *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, *The Middle-Class Aristocrat* or *The Would-Be Noble*.

⁴⁷ Vuorinen, "Arvid Järnefelt".

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